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5 December 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Although General Norstad's letter of 16 November in general takes into account your letter of 20 October with its enclosure, there are certain significant respects in which it diverges. The following paragraphs therefore expand somewhat on previous guidance concerning the nature and purpose of the several phases of the US preferred sequence of actions. These more detailed expressions of US policy should equip General Norstad to proceed with planning and with winning Allied support.

The goal of Phase I is to establish clearly that the Soviet Bloc is in fact interfering with our access, or other vital interests. It is essential that such interference be determined unequivocally, in order to have a firm, generally accepted basis for subsequent actions. The measures used to determine the Soviet Bloc intent, however, will be restricted to those which will not in themselves set up an irrevocable chain of military escalation. What is contemplated, therefore, is a probe on the order of fighter escort in the air corridors under JACK PINE rules of engagement, or the platoon-sized FREE STYLE probe along the autobahn. The US would not expect these probes to be reinforced militarily in Phase I.

There are obvious military and psychological disadvantages to initiating operations of this nature and then discontinuing them, leaving the Soviets for the time being in possession of their objectives, particularly if, for example, the probe force were destroyed. These disadvantages are outweighed, however, by the need for unmistakably establishing deliberate Soviet Bloc interference, using Allied actions which, because they do not of themselves appreciably increase the risk of major war, can be initiated promptly by the tripartite powers themselves, without awaiting extensive NATO actions such as Reinforced Alert.

Clearly, the Soviets may at any time regardless of probes, raise the operation to more intense levels. Insofar as our own initiatives are concerned, however, the decision is for a first phase which will not escalate unless the Soviets insist.

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Authority LTH, 11 AM 11 Dec

By JTH NLE Date 1/22/94

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The purpose of the non-combatant Phase II is ~~two-fold~~. First, we will seek to bring all available non-combatant pressure, political, economic, and military, to bear on the Soviet Union to dissuade them from their course. Second, we will strengthen our military posture as much as possible, both to increase the pressure on the Soviets and to improve our capabilities for subsequent phases if they eventuate. Our initiatives in this phase will definitely be non-combatant; thus blockade would not be used, though lesser maritime measures might.

Phase III, the non-nuclear phase, may prove less controllable. Our proposed initiatives will engender great risks of heavy Soviet reaction, conventional or nuclear. The US is prepared to take these risks at this stage of the situation, but every opportunity must be maximized to avoid uncontrolled escalation. It may not be possible to carry out Phase III so as to face the Soviets with a progressively intensifying situation and to give them time enough, stage by stage, to reconsider, but to the degree that it is possible, this is what must be done. The military object of Phase III, after the establishment of Soviet intent, is to produce non-nuclear combat, on a substantial scale, over as extended a period as possible.

General Norstad's proposed planners' memorandum describes Allied initiatives during Phase III as "short-term actions which will have served their purpose soon after initiation, probably within hours". Soviet reaction might possibly be swift and massive enough to produce the conditions in which the President would direct the initiation of nuclear war by the US. An overwhelming assault upon Hamburg, Munich and Berlin is conceivable and would bring that result, for example. However, the Soviet response, like the Allied nuclear decision, would be not a military reaction but a question of overall state policy. At national government level, where state policy can best be assessed, the restraints upon Soviet action appear great, and Allied interests appear to be best served by giving the Soviet leaders both motive and opportunity for changing their course. To do this, the Allied objective must be the ability to prolong, not abbreviate, the non-nuclear phase.

Obviously, such Phase III operations would involve losses to Allied military forces, air, ground and sea, nuclear and non-nuclear. Such losses should of course be minimized, and Allied forces will make every effort to keep the loss ratio favorable, or in balance. The air situation would appear, potentially, to offer possibilities in this regard. Some unbalanced losses, however, would occur, including losses to AGC nuclear potential, and can be accepted.

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The general statement that no action taken can, under any circumstances, be permitted to detract from our overall military position, applied literally, would seem to make Phase III operations, as the US conceives them, impossible. The type of ground actions proposed, if preceded by the proposed build-up, could in fact improve our overall military position. As to air operations, it had been understood that during discussions with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 November, General Norstad had judged it possible to carry on an air battle for an extended period with losses acceptable to ACE.

Phase IV, the nuclear phase, may of course be brought about at any stage by Soviet actions or reactions, or under some contingencies by our own decisions at the time. The crucial importance of not permitting the Soviets to pre-empt is clear. In the existing relative nuclear situation viewed from the overall standpoint, however, nuclear war promises the Soviets nothing; we can press them heavily before they can consider general war their best remaining alternative. We will at the time take all measures of readiness, alertness, and deployment which can contribute to making their pre-emption patently unwise. In any case, on our side the responsibility for initiating nuclear war rests squarely upon the President's shoulders. General Norstad's task will be, while maintaining his segment of our nuclear capability at the best practicable readiness, to prosecute the non-nuclear Phase III operations as favorably for the Allies as he can, as long as he can, so that the nuclear decision will remain under Presidential control, to be taken at the President's choosing for maximum Allied benefit.

In connection with nuclear alternatives, General Norstad has been requested in your October 20 letter to submit his recommendations concerning command and control procedures for restricted nuclear operations, Contingencies IV A and B.

There remains the problem of bringing our Allies to a convinced and understanding support of these military policies. During Chancellor Adenauer's visit, some US thinking was exposed to him and the principal members of his party. Further actions are under preparation, to be implemented before and during the NATO ministerial meeting, to advance Allied understanding. The US also relies heavily upon General Norstad's great influence and stature in conveying and supporting the US position. The program of convincing our friends must, however, be managed with great care. It appears undesirable at this time to introduce to an international staff the range of possible political actions mentioned in General Norstad's proposed instructions, since they are still under consideration in four power discussions.

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In any case, the planning guidance General Norstad issues should serve both to stimulate the build-up of required forces and lead to the development of agreed Allied plans for the use of these forces in accordance with the sequence of military action set out in your letter of October 20.

/s/ Dean Rusk

Secretary of State

/s/ Robert S. McNamara

Secretary of Defense

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